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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000936

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SUBJECT: HEALTH MINISTER FOCUSES ON REFORM AND GLOBAL FUND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DJIBOUTI

1. (U) Summary: In separate meetings September 13 with USAID Representative and Ambassador, Minister of Health, Abdallah Abdillahi Miguil, focused on health development and reform of Djibouti's Ministry of Health. Cost recovery for renovation of Peltier and improving health services and human resources would be a major issue for his ministry and for the government. The Minister also expressed disappointment that Djibouti's application to the Fifth Round of the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria had been turned down by the Global Fund. Ambassador pledged assistance of USAID staff in helping the Ministry address issues raised in the Global Fund's technical evaluation of the proposal. End Summary.

2. (U) In a meeting September 13 with USAID Representative, accompanied by USAID/Djibouti Senior Health Advisor and USAID/Djibouti Health Specialist-FSN, Minister of Health Abdallah Abdillahi Miguil reviewed his plans for health reform in Djibouti. These plans include renovating and reviewing functions of its primary hospital, Peltier, improving human resources, and improving the quality of health services. For the Minister, cost recovery was a major issue. He said the Ministry of Health had developed a plan for it and the plan would be shared with USAID. In addition, Miguil said, the Ministry had already begun implementing a cost recovery program at two hospitals, including Peltier, and that a briefing meeting on the subject would be held by the end of October.

3. (U) The Minister also voiced his concern about the small percentage of the national budget that goes to support his Ministry. Currently only 4% of the budget is allocated for the Ministry of Health. He suggested that USAID exert all pressure possible on the central government to assist in convincing the government to increase his ministry's budget.

4. (U) USAID representative asked the Minister about his views on the joint health and education program with the Ministry of Education to fight drug usage, including khat. She wanted to know if the Minister was still on board for the program and sought additional ideas he had about the approach, including the role envisaged for USAID. She cited USAID's many years of experience in other African countries developing and using telemedia to educate the public about health issues such as HIV/AIDS and other diseases. The Minister said that at this time, his Ministry does not have a clear policy on health education, but that he would convene a small planning team to look into the matter. The Minister added that he intended to launch a large anti-drug campaign on November 20, during the worldwide "Day of the Child" celebration.

5. (U) The Minister also indicated that he will seek technical assistance from USAID as well as other partners to help the Ministry of Health evaluate whether or not it can achieve the objectives of its "National Health Reform Strategy". The evaluation might help the Ministry make slight adjustments, as needed, in order that overall objectives are more readily attained.

6. (U) Miguil noted to USAID representative that the next health "Donor Coordination" meeting would be held during the first week of October. He voiced his concern that the World Health Organization (WHO) holds the presidency of this committee rather than himself. USAID representative agreed that the Minister should chair this committee, and that USAID would work to see that the change was made. It was reported, as well, that the technical committee on human resources of the "Donor Coordination" group, met in June to discuss progress and efforts made to improve human resources within the Ministry of Health. Another meeting will be held later in October.

17. (U) USAID representative noted during the meeting that her agency was working to help create an improved health information system, that was computer-based, but many obstacles to its development remain. A similar program was developed within the Ministry of Education with USAID assistance, and that the same could be done within the Ministry of Health.

18. (U) During a separate meeting the same day with Ambassador and USAID Representative, the Minister conveyed his disappointment over the failure of Djibouti to secure additional resources from the Global Fund for Djibouti's Tuberculosis and Malaria prevention and treatment proposal, which was submitted for the 5th round of funding. He gave a copy to the Ambassador of the technical evaluation provided by the Fund. The Ambassador pledged the assistance of the USAID team in working with Ministry of Health officials to help them address the issues raised in the technical evaluation. She, with the Minister, wanted to ensure that a proper and comprehensive response could be submitted before the deadline of September 22, 2005. Although the Minister said he thought USAID representatives had been consulted in the initial round of preparation of Djibouti's proposal, it was subsequently learned that USAID had not been asked to provide input into the original application for this round.

RAGSDALE